

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **THE LAND USE PLAN**

### **A. GENERAL CONCEPTS**

The Land Use Plan for the City of Sugar Land should incorporate all of the City's adopted Goals, Objectives, and Strategies of Chapter 5. These community values provide guidance for the City's desired growth, development, and redevelopment.

In the past, the City has grown through the annexation of developed Municipal Utility Districts, a practice that has led to a pattern of Master Planned Communities. Due to changes in economics and an increased interest to further ensure a continuation of quality development, the City has expressed its intention to annex undeveloped land, thereby gaining the most effective means to provide the community with orderly growth and development.

Sugar Land's residential areas are expected to remain primarily single family residential in nature. There may be some limited areas set aside to meet a recent trend toward smaller lot sizes and a mix of condominiums or townhomes within a commercial area.

The new Land Use Plan will need to incorporate additional acreage for economic development purposes, such as commercial, office, and Research and Development. An analysis of the Land Use Plan draft will be conducted to measure the land use percentages and ascertain whether a reasonable balance is reflected on the map.

### **B. LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS**

The following use classifications will be used on the Land Use Plan:

#### **SINGLE FAMILY**

Single family homes on individually owned lots at suburban densities (generally between two acre minimum lots and up to six units per acre)

Also includes:

Rural residential (two acre lots and greater)

#### **HIGH DENSITY SINGLE FAMILY/ATTACHED RESIDENTIAL**

Single family homes that are not stacked but may have common side walls; densities are typically higher, or may be concentrated within one portion of a development, leaving open space in another area

Also includes:

Condos

Cluster homes

Patio homes

Townhomes

**MULTI-FAMILY**

Typically stacked units that are mostly rental in nature

Includes:

Duplexes

Three-plexes

Fourplexes

Apartment complexes

Dormitories

**OFFICE/SERVICE**

Office uses and professional services

Includes:

Corporate headquarters

Financial Services

**NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES/RETAIL**

Limited commercial uses that typically serve a neighborhood where the scale is kept at a neighborhood level

**RETAIL COMMERCIAL**

All commercial but no industrial or R&D uses

**MIXED USE – RESIDENTIAL/RETAIL**

Planned developments that include commercial and residential uses, either within the same block or within the same building

**MIXED USE – RETAIL/R&D**

Planned developments that include primarily Research and Development, company headquarters, light assembly, and light industrial uses (see below) with supporting retail uses.

**LIGHT INDUSTRIAL**

Uses such as those described in the City of Sugar Land Target Industry Study.

These include:

Biomedical/Life Sciences R&D

Energy related industry

Specialty Electronics

**HEAVY INDUSTRIAL**

Manufacturing uses that typically emit substantial smoke, odors, and/or noise, and that have a high impact on surrounding uses and on the visual quality of the area they are located within.

## **PARKS/OPEN/BUFFERS**

Areas that are officially set aside to provide green space within the corporate limits.

Includes:

Public and private parks

Greenways

Golf courses

Off-road walking trails and bike paths

Regional detention ponds that have been designed as amenities

Brazos River Corridor

Country Clubs

## **WATERWAYS**

Floodways and other watercourses.

Includes:

Natural creek and river beds

Oxbow lakes

Ponds

Man-made water features

## **PUBLIC**

Includes:

Churches

Public and private schools

Government buildings

Libraries

## **C. DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines were adopted in 1993 and are incorporated in this chapter for review and discussion:

### **Neighborhoods**

The focal point of Sugar Land's neighborhoods remains the *elementary school*. Surrounding the schools are single family homes serviced by discontinuous residential streets. Collector streets provide access from the residential streets to the arterials, which, in turn, feed the Freeways. For the most part the neighborhoods in Sugar Land are identified with subdivisions containing between 350 and 500 homes.

As future neighborhoods are developed special attention should be given to the following design elements:

- To the maximum extent feasible, arterials or greater thoroughfares should not bisect a subdivision - they should be at the edge.

- Collector streets serving single family areas should be designed to minimize the incidence of traffic filtering into residential neighborhoods and to deter speeding. This should be enforced with traffic controls and geometric design.
- Access to multi-family developments should be in accordance with subdivision standards providing direct access to collector streets which in turn should provide convenient access to arterial roadways or highways/freeways.
- Commercial and retail uses should be limited to the convenience goods and services appropriate to the immediate neighborhood such as laundry pick-up, convenience stores, day care, barber and beauty shops, video rentals, and the like. These are appropriate at the intersection of collector streets or at collector and arterial intersections.
- Drainage channels and detention ponds should be located to allow joint use as green belts, hike and bike trails, and as alternate routes to and from schools, parks and recreation facilities. Where appropriate, easements obtained for such uses should have carefully worded legal instruments that will provide for flexibility of use in the future.

### **Townhouses/Condominiums/Apartments**

The low density character of the City of Sugar Land has been established through many years of planning and sensitive development. Since its inception as a family oriented community the citizens have repeatedly voiced a desire to enhance their neighborhood atmosphere and community values. The proven advantages of single family neighborhoods over high density multi-unit dwelling forms has led to Sugar Land retaining it's highly desirable small town atmosphere.

The city recognizes the need for a number of housing choices, including multi-units, to provide for the needs of new households, for temporary residences for families moving to the city, for those who desire the convenience of housing without maintenance, and for those that cannot afford to purchase single family homes. Architectural style, bulk, height and design are of critical importance when blending these uses into neighborhoods. Street facades should resemble single family houses, yards and drives should be similar to adjoining single family properties and signage should be consistent to surrounding neighborhoods.

As much as possible these higher density developments should be designed as an integral part of the neighborhood. This should be accomplished by limiting the highest density to no more than twenty units to the acre, a maximum of no more than two hundred units at any one location, and no more than three hundred such units within any one square mile of the City. The limitation on units per square mile will be implemented by using a circle that has a 3,000 foot radius that can be moved surrounding the proposed development to determine the concentration within any one square mile in the City and ETJ. In addition, such developments (apartments, condominiums, townhouses and other group residential

uses) should be dispersed throughout the community to avoid undue concentration of population. This should be accomplished by spacing developments to ensure a balance in each location of single family residences and multi-unit dwellings. Further, the location should provide for at least 1/2 mile separation of multi-unit dwelling developments.

The general plans for neighborhoods should specifically design open space and recreation facilities to serve all the residents of all types of dwelling units.

In specific terms multi-unit dwelling developments should be planned and designed as part of each neighborhood in which they are proposed rather than as peripheral uses isolated from the activity and vitality of the neighborhood.

### **Neighborhood Convenience Centers**

These facilities are intended to serve the daily needs of an individual neighborhood. They should be located at intersections of collector streets or collector/arterials. Operations would be consistent with normal residential hours and large sign or displays are inappropriate.

### **Shopping Centers**

These facilities are intended to serve a larger area, up to six square miles and generally contain up to 400,000 square feet of space. Because of their size, they should be located on arterials or greater. The Williams Trace Shopping Center is a good example of such a center. There is a proposed regional shopping mall at SH6 and Highway 59.

### **Schools**

Elementary schools should be located at the intersection of collector streets. The traffic generated by these facilities exceeds the normal capacity of residential streets. Schools should not be located on arterials or highways/freeways in order to provide maximum protection to children and to lessen congestion on those streets. High schools and middle schools should be located in a campus setting with signalized access from a collector to an internal street and parking system.

### **Churches**

These facilities may be located on either collector greater streets, but should not be situated such that primary access requires using residential streets.

## **C. MAP OF FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

The Land Use Plan will begin with a base map that shows existing or recently approved land uses that are either 1) in their final zoning classification, or 2) . These “givens” are shown on Figure #. That map leaves vacant the areas where a determination is needed regarding the City’s preference of uses. The recommended infill land uses will be added to the map to complete the Plan after a public input period. This draft report describes those infill areas, discusses the influencing area characteristics, and lays out potential land use alternative options.

### **Infill areas within the City Limits**

#### **Area 1**



Area 1 is the City’s Mixed Use Conservation (MUC) district. The existing Land Use Plan, which was adopted in 1993, reflects the area to be Research/Industrial. Discussions regarding the area that have occurred more since the adoption of the 1993 plan focused on the transitional nature of the area. Market conditions had created pressure for commercial uses, which conflicted with a desire to preserve the historic and residential character of the area. These discussions resulted in the creation of the MUC zoning district, which allows both residential and a limited amount of light commercial uses with an attempt to mitigate potential negative impacts and encourage preservation through the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process. A CUP is generally considered an effective tool to allow surrounding property owners to provide input into the approval process through the public hearings. The decision makers (in our case, the City Council with a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission) have the authority to incorporate mitigating conditions into the development. However, a CUP is not effective where preservation is the true goal of a regulation because there are little to no standards or guidelines provided for the ultimate decision makers. Additional discussion should center on a) clear and concise direction regarding the City’s goal for the area and b) a more effective way of implementing that goal.

There are public, office/service, and low impact commercial uses currently existing and acting as a transition area between the regional commercial uses at the Highway 90A and Highway 6 intersection and the residential areas of Brookside/Belknap, Venetian Estates, Alkire, and Sugar Lakes. There are a few single family homes still in residential use among the other homes that are transitioning to low impact commercial uses on the west side of Brooks south of Guenther.

Three of the tracts, the new Credit Union site currently under construction on the southwest corner of Brooks and Guenther, as well as the former Imperial Sugar support center between Guenther and Brooks, were recently rezoned to B-O due to the limitations of the MUC use regulations. A request for B-2 for the former Palm Theater site on the southeast corner of HWY 90A and Guenther was denied in favor of the B-O designation. The B-2 was considered too intense for the nature of the remaining MUC district and for from a traffic generation standpoint.

In the future, the MUC district regulations may need to be reexamined as part of a future neighborhood enhancement study of the City's older neighborhoods. Changes to add additional reasonable commercial uses, to provide additional standards, and perhaps to add more effective preservation regulations should be considered.

#### *Options for the MUC zoned lots north of Guenther*

##### *Options include the following:*

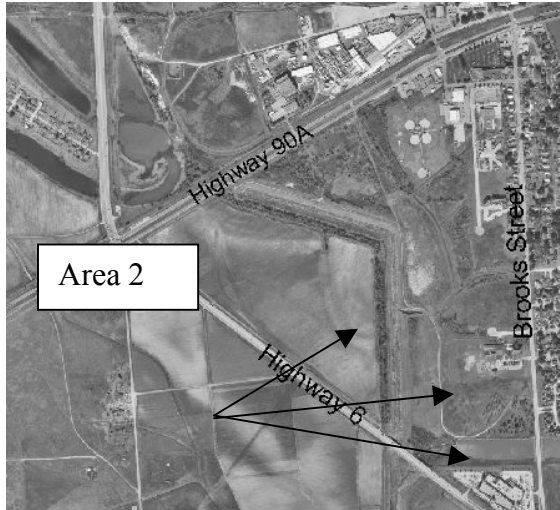
- 1. Keep the MUC designation and redraft the district regulations.*
- 2. Allow rezoning to B-O.*
- 3. Allow rezoning to B-2.*

#### *Options for the MUC zoned lots south of Guenther*

##### *Options include the following:*

- 1. Keep the MUC designation and redraft district regulations.*
- 2. Allow rezoning to B-O.*
- 3. Allow rezoning to B-1.*

## Area 2



Area 2 is located between Brooks Street and Highway 6 and between Wal-mart and Memorial Hermann Hospital. It is reflected as office/service on the existing Land Use Plan. About most of the area is zoned B-O in accordance with the Plan. The western portion was rezoned PD a few years ago. The PD discussions included the intention that some of the future pad sites should develop as B-O type uses rather than the more intense B-2; however, no specific designations were identified in the final ordinance that rezoned the property. Instead, there were several uses identified as conditional uses rather than uses by right, presumably to allow the potential to limit certain sites to office/service on a case-by-case basis.

Most of the property within the area is vacant. Developed properties include Willie's Ice House on Highway 6 and a church on Brooks. There are two bank sites currently in process for approval at the University and Highway 6 intersection adjacent to Willie's. Discussions during the rezoning case included a desire to retain some exclusively office uses. However, it appears that the area tends to attract a variety of more retail type commercial uses. There are perhaps more appropriate places to set aside for use of strictly offices, such as the Flour property and Tract 3.

### *Options for Area 2*

*Options include the following:*

- 1. City initiate rezoning of the remaining PD to B-O.*
- 2. Keep existing B-O and PD mix.*
- 3. Allow rezoning to B-2.*



### Area 3



Area 3 is the inner portion of the Fluor Daniel property that is currently zoned B-O and PD, roughly half of which remains vacant. The Land Use Plan shows the entire Fluor property, including the outer tracts lining HWY 6 and HWY 59, as office/service. However, all of the adjoining outer tracts have been rezoned to B-2, allowing for more intense uses than the B-O zoning would have permitted. The developed portions include office and R&D type uses. The existing development is more of a campus, with well-landscaped parking lots that are served by pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The property is discussed in the City of Sugar Land Target Industry Study, which identifies the Fluor property to be conducive for office/service uses, R&D, and light manufacturing.

The eventual land uses should mitigate potential negative impacts to the well-established residential areas in the vicinity to the north. The current landowners have recently considered requesting the northern-most corners for residential development. The current infrastructure would need to be upgraded to handle the increased impacts that such development would have on utilities and the interior and adjacent traffic system.

#### *Options for the inner Fluor property*

Options include the following:

1. *Rezone entire area to a consolidated B-O classification to reserve the acreage for office uses exclusively.*
2. *Rezone into a consolidated P-D to allow a mix of office/service, R&D, light manufacturing, and support retail uses.*

## Areas 4A and 4B



Area 4A is the Imperial Sugar and 4B is Ondeo Nalco. They are the only places in the City that are zoned and used as M-2 Heavy Industrial. Both sites are shown as Research/Industrial on the current Land Use Plan. Imperial backs up to established single family residential development. Ondeo abuts vacant property that is currently outside the City Limits.

Imperial Sugar has ceased most of its activities and is no longer processing sugar. The City anticipates that the remaining office use will soon discontinue. Once Imperial closes or relocates, additional studies ought to be conducted to investigate different land use options for site, including the possibility of obtaining federal or state grants for its redevelopment. Any redevelopment efforts should involve the City's Economic Development Department.

Ondeo Nalco is currently in full operation and the City is not aware of any plans to cease or decrease the use. The use requires a transition area between it and any residential uses. Once Imperial Sugar closes, this site will be the only M-2 zoned area in the City of Sugar Land that will be a heavy industrial use. If the use shows any indication of becoming discontinued in the future, the City may choose to study potential options for future reuse or redevelopment. However, at this time, there is no need to begin such a study.

### *Options for the Imperial property*

*Options include the following:*

- 1. Rezone to M-1 to decrease potential visual, noise, polluting, and other impacts.*
- 2. Rezone to a B-2 classification and encourage commercial use. The existing use would be grandfathered until a full conversion to a commercial use is accomplished.*
- 3. Study the site for other redevelopment opportunities.*

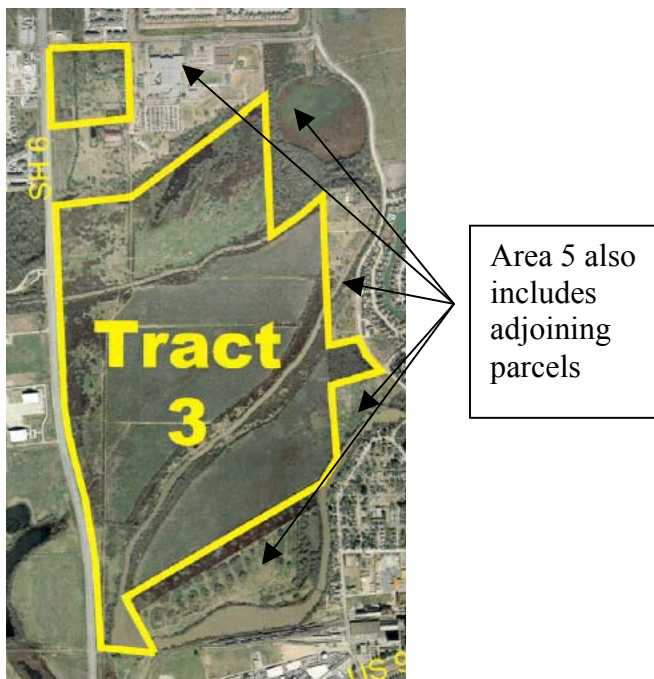
### *Options for the Ondeo Nalco property*

*Options include the following:*

- 1. Retain the current M-2 zoning to allow continuation of the existing use.*
- 2. Identify the site for future study to be triggered if the use ceases in the future.*
- 3. Rezone to a less intense zoning district, thereby grandfathering the existing use but limiting expansion.*

### **Infill areas outside the City Limits**

#### **Area 5**



Area 5 is Tract 3 and some adjoining parcels to the south, north, and east. Area 5 contains many physical constraints. It is shown on the Land Use Plan as Research/Industrial. Kempner High School fronts on Voss in the northern area, and a new TxDot sign shop facility exists along HWY 6. The northwest corner is located within the City Limits and is zoned B-2. The remainder of the tract is not zoned because it lies outside of the City's zoning jurisdiction. The City intends to annex the property in the near future.

The entirety of Tract 3 is covered by the Airport Noise Impact District, and the western HWY 6 frontage is within the AZ-01 District, restricting uses to nonresidential. There are multiple wetlands covering the tract and Oyster Creek winds through it. The natural areas could provide buffering between differing land uses. The Target Industry Study identified the tract as ideal for retail commercial, office and light industrial uses. The likely pressure for development, however, may be for multi-family and single family uses with a strip of commercial along Highway 6.

Land uses in the area include well established single family across Burney Road – any new development in the eastern portion should occur with minimal impact to that area. There are several multi-family uses located in the vicinity across Voss and HWY 6. There may be pressure to continue this pattern on Tract 3. The property flanks the Ondeo Nalco property on two sides. This proximity, coupled with the airport constraints, does not render the majority of the area conducive for residential development. Representatives from Ondeo Nalco have likewise expressed concern that there be no residential uses immediately adjacent to their site.

#### *Options for Area 5*

*Options include the following:*

- 1. Show the entire tract as single family with M-1 zoning adjacent to Ondeo Nalco. Heavy landscape buffering will need to be shown between differing land uses and between HWY and single family.*
- 2. Show all of the frontage along HWY 6 as future commercial zoning. Show the remainder of the property as mixed use office/service/R&D with a transition of single family, perhaps at higher densities, toward Burney Road*
- 3. Show the area as depicted in Conceptual Alternative C in the Target Industry Study.*

#### **Area 6**



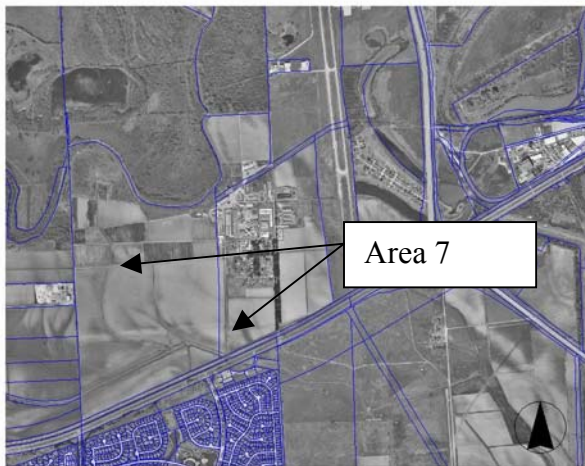
Area 6 is outside the City Limits east of Maranatha Farms. The current Land Use Plan shows the area as single family residential. The City owns one of the tracts; it contains a water treatment plant. The City has plans to expand that facility in the future. The Riverstone development will abut the area to the east and to the south. The approved General Plan for Riverstone shows townhome uses to the east and future residential/commercial mix to the south. Oilfield Road is shown as a major collector on the Thoroughfare Plan. Single family and higher density single family would be appropriate for the area, with perhaps some commercial use at the intersection of Oilfield Road and the future Riverstone collector, across from the proposed commercial in Riverstone.

#### *Options for Area 6*

*Options include the following:*

- 1. Show the entire tract as single family with public uses over the existing and future wastewater treatment facility.*
- 2. Show the area as primarily single family with some townhome uses across from the Riverstone townhomes and a possible neighborhood commercial site at the intersection. Show the existing and future City facility as public.*
- 3. Show the area as largely townhome. Show the existing and future City facility as public.*

#### **Area 7**



Area 7 is Tract 2, which lies west of the Airport and is currently not accessible with the exception of one railroad crossing. A smaller sliver of land is located just south of the Airport between the runway and HWY 90A. It is currently shown as Institutional on the current Land Use Plan because it is still under the State Department of Corrections' ownership. The easternmost sliver of land is shown as a future expansion area for the Airport. Some of the tract is located within the AZ-01 zone; the area to the north and west is largely vacant prison property. The City is in need of additional M-1 zoning for

uses such as the ones found in the Sugar Land Business Park. If accessibility can be improved to the remainder of the tract that is not needed for the Airport, the area would lend itself to commercial, office, warehousing, and light industrial uses.

#### *Options for Area 7*

*Options include the following:*

1. *Show the entire tract as single family residential with extensive buffering along HWY 90A and the railroad tracts. Noise attenuation and avigation easements would be needed in such a case.*
2. *Show the area as a future light manufacturing use.*